DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 189 619 CS 205 699

AUTHOR Weiss, R. H.: Walters, S. A.
TITLE Writing Apprehension: Implications for Teaching, Writing, and Concept Clarity.
PUB DATE Mar 80
NOTE 13p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (30th, Washington, DC, March 13-15, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Anxiety: Higher Education: *Learning Theories: Student Attitudes: Teaching Methods: *Writing (Composition): *Writing Instruction: *Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS Writing across the Curriculum: *Writing Apprehension

ABSTRACT

A study of the relationship between the quantity of writing assignments and writing apprehension involved 352 college students enrolled in 20 classes in eight discipline areas. Writing apprehension was measured by using the Daly-Miller writing apprehension inventory as a pretest and posttest. Tasks involving learning-centered writing (writing designed solely to enhance learning, requiring neither use of academic prose nor teacher evaluation) were used in 15 classes to help students increase the amounts and clarity of learned content: students in five control classes learned content without the help of writing tasks. Results indicated that while decreases in apprehension in the experimental classes were not significant statistically, increasing the amounts of learning-centered writing tasks was related to decreases in writing apprehension rather than to the increases feared by many who hesitate to use writing in content areas. (AEA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED189619

WRITING APPREHENSION:

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING, WRITING, AND CONCEPT CLARITY

R. H. WEISS
S. A. WALTERS

WEST CHESTER STATE COLLEGE
WEST CHESTER, PA 19380

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R.H. Weiss
S.A. Walters
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PRESENTED TO THE SESSION ON WRITING ANXIETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AT THE CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

ANNUAL MEETING, APRIL 1980, WASHINGTON, D. C.

C S205699

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Writing Apprehension: Implications for Teaching, Writing, and Concept Clarity

R. H. Weiss, S. A. Walters, West Chester State College

The teaching profession seems largely responsive to the idea of writing across the curriculum (Martin, 1976b), but considerable uncertainty exists about why or how to implement it. Content teachers may be reluctant to accept a writing emphasis in their courses because they may see no purpose for doing so other than to improve student writing, which, they argue, is a job for English. They may also be concerned that increased writing will increase their students' apprehension or their own workload. Obviously, instructors who fail to make writing assignments also fail to affect positively their students' attitudes to writing or their ability to write. However, when instructors do yield to the current clamor about student writing and accept the idea of writing across the curriculum, they may implement it in ways that compound rather than solve student writing problems. Their view of the functions of writing is likely to be highly traditional, oriented to the product rather than the student in process of learning, so that the writing they are likely to assign in their classes is merely a means of testing (the essay exam) or a form of discipline (the term paper). Sometimes it is merely ritual behavior, as in the case of instructors whose only reasons for assigning a research paper are that they thought it was expected. Thus, contrary to the best of intentions, writing assignments given in content courses may also fail to affect positively students' writing performance and may deeply disappoint the taskmasters, even to the extent of influencing them away from the ranks of instructors who assign writing.

A good case can be made that this failure of performance is a function of students' performance anxieties about traditional academic writing. In other words, students in content courses may not respond successfully to the usual

kinds of writing assignments, the conventional essay examination and term papers, because they have a high degree of apprehension about writing. Writing apprehension, as defined by Daly and Miller (1975b) when they developed an instrument to measure it, reflects a person's predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably toward situations where writing is required. Since 1975, Daly and others have been reporting research showing relationships between writing apprehension and other variables. Significant relations between amounts of writing apprehension were reported with diversity, length, quality, and intensity of language (Daly & Miller, 1975a: Daly, 1977), and with performance on standardized tests of writing competency (Daly, 1978), with selection of courses involving writing (Daly and Miller, 1975c), with teacher expectations (Daly, 1979), with amount of change in attitudes about writing (Toth, 1975), and with occupation selection (Daly and Shamo, 1976). Daly and Miller (1975c) also report a study showing that writing apprehensions as measured by self-report tends to be relatively independent of other individual differences, such as SAT scores, success expectations, and sex differences. Apprehensiveness about the essay examination or the term paper may significantly mar students' performance on these tasks.

Teachers who are part of the movement for language in education--especially in the area of writing--are aware of other kinds of writing tasks, which may be called learning-centered or "formative" writing tasks. These tasks do not call for formal academic prose, present no threat to already apprehensive students, require no evaluation (or further strain on on teacher workloads), are designed solely to enhance learning, and should not increase students' apprehension toward writing. The essential purpose of such writing is to answer either or both of two related questions: how well am I learning something, or how well can I express something being learned,

or any variation of them. Personal revelation is encouraged, even when the writing responds to specific queries or reading, as is not the case in most college or school writing.

In research currently conducted at West Chester State College on writing to learn, one major purpose is to test the hypothesis that the more students do learning-centered writing in content classes, the less apprehensive about writing they will be. This hypothesis is intended to shed light on the notion that assigning more writing than usual to students yields increased apprehension, anxiety, and even rebelliousness in attitude and behavior. It was felt, however, that while this idea might hold true when the number of traditional writing tasks was increased in a content course, it might not hold true for non-traditional learning-centered writing. That being the case, instructors in content courses could be convinced to assign learning-centered writing tasks on the grounds that their students' learning would increase but their apprehensiveness about writing would not.

Three other hypotheses are also being tested as a series of quasi-experimental concurrent replications: (1) the more that students do such writing in their content courses, the better they will write; (2) the more and the more often that students do learning-centered writing about a subject, the more they will learn about it; and (3) the concepts students do learning-centered writing about will be clearer to them than the concepts they do not write about. Conclusive findings regarding the value of learning-centered writing for increasing learning would be greatly influential in the movement to convince otherwise reluctant faculty members to institute a humane, pedagogically sound program of writing within their content courses. Analyses of some of the data collected to test these four hypotheses were first reported in San Francisco for the National Council of Teachers of English and later in Washington for the Association of Teacher Educators. Another report will be

made next month at the American Educational Research Association's annual meeting in Boston.

The purpose of this study is to report the analyses of additional data testing the hypothesis related to writing apprehension: that the more students do learning-centered writing, the less apprehensive about writing they will be.

Learning-centered writing techniques were used in fifteen undergraduate and graduate classes to help students increase the amounts and clarity of content learned in eight different discipline areas. Students in five control classes which were equivalent to experimental classes learned content without the help of using learning-centered writing. Data were collected from 352 students in a total of 20 classes taught by eleven different instructors, all full-time faculty members at West Chester State College.

Writing apprehension was measured by using the Daly-Miller (1975) writing apprehension inventory as a pre and posttest for the students in each of the 20 classes.

Analyses of variance were calculated to test the differences between pretest and posttest assessments for each class (Table I), the fifteen experimental classes ($F = 1.51$, df 1/499), and the total twenty classes ($F = 1.41$, df 1/665). Analyses of covariance were used to test the differences in writing apprehension gain scores between equivalent experimental and control classes (Table II). Apprehension toward writing decreased in eleven of the fifteen experimental classes, but none of the F's were significant. Writing apprehension decreased more in the experimental classes (two of three comparisons) when compared with equivalent control classes, but these differences were not significant.

The data reported here support the results of other research indicating that writing apprehension is a stable variable. While

decreases in apprehension are not significant statistically, increasing the amounts of writing by using learning-centered writing was related to decreases in apprehension toward writing, not increases in apprehension, as feared by many who hesitate to use writing in content classes.

Powerful implications emerge from this finding for faculty members in and out of English. If students can be made to write where they ordinarily would not, if their instructors do not have to be burdened by evaluating mountains of prose, if students can do such additional writing which clearly pays off in terms of improved learning, and if they can write more without dreading it more, the field is open for significant improvement in their writing performance, and a large part of the job of writing instructors will have been accomplished.

TABLE I SUMMARY TABLE FOR ANALYSES OF VARIANCE BETWEEN PRETEST AND POSTTEST WRITING APPREHENSION SCORES

Subject	N_1	Pretest Mean	N_2	Posttest Mean	Gain	F
Experimental Classes:						
History	27	83.5	25	82.8	- 0.7	.02
History	21	86.6	18	90.2	+ 3.6	.35
History	34	87.2	30	85.1	- 2.1	.20
History	11	77.5	10	77.6	+ 0.1	.00004
History	12	92.3	12	95.5	+ 3.2	.22
Biology	12	96.6	9	96.5	- 0.1	.0002
Science	22	86.9	21	83.4	- 3.5	.39
Science	19	82.2	17	89.5	+ 7.3	2.18
Health	14	87.8	12	87.9	+ 0.1	.00006
Statistics	14	80.8	14	83.6	+ 2.8	.30
Statistics	18	88.1	15	93.3	+ 5.2	1.2
Reading	8	80.0	8	84.1	+ 4.1	.001
Psychology	22	86.6	20	92.0	+ 5.4	1.26
English	17	80.2	16	89.5	+ 9.2	3.47
English	11	91.1	9	92.0	+ 3.2	.17
Control Classes:						
Statistics	7	91.1	7	91.0	- 0.1	.03
Reading	8	91.2	8	90.5	- 0.7	.06
Psychology	30	81.7	28	85.5	+ 3.8	.53
Psychology	16	93.3	12	92.4	- .9	.03
Psychology	22	91.5	24	89.4	- 2.1	1.32

TABLE II SUMMARY TABLE FOR ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE FOR PRETEST, POSTTEST, AND ADJUSTED POSTTEST MEANS AND REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE ON ONE COMPARISON

Criterion	Subject	Factor level	Pretest mean	Posttest mean	Adjusted posttest mean	F
Writing Apprehension (Hypothesis 1)	Statistics (N=20)	Experimental	80.79	83.57	85.76	.09 (NS)
		Control	91.14	91.86	87.48	
	Psychology (N=37)	Experimental	92.21	92.63	90.12	1.30 (NS)
		Control	86.95	91.58	94.09	
	Reading (N=13)	Experimental	80.00	84.13	88.09	.35 (NS)
		Control	91.17	90.50	85.21	
Writing skill (Hypothesis 2)	Statistics (N=6)	Experimental	3.17	3.67	3.60	.61 (NS)
		Control	4.00	4.33	4.46	
	Psychology (N=31)	Experimental	5.21	5.36	5.21	.26 (NS)
		Control	4.17	5.44	5.56	
	Physical Science (split group) (N=61)	Experimental	5.67	4.87	4.76	.13 (NS)
		Control	5.22	4.53	4.64	
Content learning (Hypothesis 3)	Statistics (N=25)	Experimental	53.13	98.31	99.22	4.32
		Control	57.70	93.10	91.65	
	Psychology (N=43)	Experimental	13.65	57.95	57.77	.53 (NS)
		Control	13.42	55.83	55.98	
	Reading (N=18)	Experimental	16.00	82.22	83.66	1.20 (NS)
		Control	17.70	80.20	78.90	
	Physical Science (split group)* (N=92)	Experimental		71.80		.75 (NS)
		Control		69.04		

*Repeated measures analysis of variance

REFERENCES:

Adams, J. A. A closed-loop theory of motor learning. Journal of Motor Behavior, 1971, 3, 111-49.

_____. Response feedback and learning. Psychological Bulletin 1968, 70, 486-504.

Ausubel, d. p. and Robinson, F. D. School learning. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

Behrens, L. Writing, reading, and the rest of the faculty: a survey. English Journal, 1978, 67, 54-60.

Bilodeau, E. A. and Bilodeau, I. M. Motor skills learning. Annual Review of Psychology, 1961, 12, 243-80.

Bloom, B. Time and learning. American Psychologist, September 1974, 29 682-88.

Bloom, M. Anxious writer: distinguishing anxiety from pathology. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, 30th, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 1979.

Boucher, J. L. Higher processes in motor learning. Journal of Motor Behavior, 1974, 6, 131-38.

Britton, J., et al. The development of writing abilities. London: MacMillan Education,1975, 11-18.

Bruner, J. S. On going beyond the information given. Contemporary approaches to cognition. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957.

_____. On knowing: essays for the left hand. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962.

_____. The relevance of education. New York: Norton, 1971

_____. Representational processes inchildhood. Beyond the information given: studies in psychology. Ed J. M. Anglin. New York: Norton, 1973.

_____. Theorems for a theory of instruction. Learning about learning. Ed. J. S. Bruner. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966.

_____. Towards a theory of instruction. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1968

Bruner, J. S. Goodnow, J. J. and Austin, A. A study of thinking. New York: Wiley, 1956.

Campbell, D. and Stanley J. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969.

Cooper, C. R. Measuring growth in writing. English Journal, March 1975, 64, 111-20.

Cox, J. W. Some experiments on formal training in the acquisition of skill. British Journal of Psychology, 1933, 24, 67-87.

Daly, J. A. The effects of writing apprehension on message encoding. Journalism Quarterly, 1977, 54, 566-572.

_____. Writing apprehension and writing competency. Journal of Educational Research, 1978, 72, 10-14.

_____. Writing apprehension in the classroom:teacher role expectancies of the apprehensive writer, Research in the Teaching of English, 1979 13, 37-44.

Daly, J.A. and Miller,M.D. Apprehension of writing as a predictor of message intensity, Journal of Psychology, 1975, 89, 175-177 (a).

_____. The empirical development of an instrument to measure writing apprehension. Research in Teaching of English, 1975, 9, 250-256 (b).

_____. Further studies on writing apprehension, SAT scores, success expectations, willingness to take advanced courses and sex differences. Research in Teaching of English, 1975, 9, 249-253 (c).

Daly, J. A. and Shamo, W. Academic decisions as a function of writing apprehension. Research in Teaching of English, 1978, 12, 119-126.

_____. Writing apprehension and occupational choice. Journal of Occupational Psychology, 1976, 49, 55-56.

Dewey, J. Experience and education. New York: MacMillan, 1938.

Emig, J. Writing as a mode of learning. College Composition and Communication, May 1977, 28, 122-27.

Fitts, P.M. and Posner, M. I. Human performance. Belmont, California: Brooks-Cole, 1967.

Flavell, J. H. The developmental psychology of Jean Piaget. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1963.

Furst, N. F. The multiple languages of the classroom. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, February 1967.

Gage, T. Composing: the art of your right brain recognizing what your left brain is recalling. Paper presented at Sociolinguistic Conference, San Francisco, 1977.

Gagne, R. M. The conditions of learning. 2nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970.

Hilgard, E. R. and Bower, G. H. Theories of learning. 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1975.

Hiller, J. H., Fisher, G. A., and Koess, W. A. Computer investigation of verbal characteristics of effective classroom learning. American Educational Research Journal, 1969, 6, 661-77.

Inhelder, B. and Piaget, J. The early growth of logic in the child: classification and seriation. Trans. E. A. Lanzer and D. Papert. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

Klinger, G.A. campus view of college writing. College Composition and Communication, 1977, 28, 343-47.

Lawrence, D. H. and Goodwin, W. R. Transfer in tracking behavior between two levels of speed. Research Bulletin, 54-70, San Antonio: Air Force Personnel and Training Research Command, 1954.

Luria, A. R. and Yudovich, F. I. Speech and the development of mental processes in the child, Ed. J. Simon, Baltimore: Penguin, 1971.

Martin, N. Language across the curriculum: a paradox and its potential for change. Educational Review, June 1976, 28, 206-19 (a).

_____, et al. Writing and learning across the curriculum 11-16. London: Ward Lock Educational, 1976 (b).

Ney, J. W. Transformation: generative theories of language and the role of conditioning in language learning. Language Learning, 1971, 31, 63-73.

Nystrand, M. Ed. Language as a way of knowing. Toronto. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1977.

Odell, L. Measuring the effect of instruction in pre-writing. Research in the Teaching of English, 1974, 8, 228-40.

_____. Piaget, problem-solving, and freshman composition. College Composition and Communication, 1973, 24, 36-42.

Piaget, J. The origins of intelligence in children. Trans. M. Cook, New York: International University, 1952.

_____. The principles of genetic epistemology. Trans. W. Mays. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.

Pike, K. L. Beyond the sentence. College Composition and Communication, October 1964, 15, 82-88 (a).

_____. A linguistic contribution to composition. College Composition and Communication, May 1964, 15, 129-35 (b).

Polanyi, M. Personal knowledge: toward a post-critical philosophy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Rohman, D. G. and Wlecke, A. O. Pre-writing: the construction and application of models to concept formation in writing. Cooperative Research Project, No. 2174, 1964, Michigan State University, Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Rosenshine, B. Objectively measured behavioral predictors of effectiveness in explaining. Tech. Report No. 4, Stanford, California: Stanford Research and Development Center in Teaching, 1968.

Shaughnessy, M. P. Errors and expectations: a guide for the teacher of basic writing. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Shutes, R. E. Verbal behaviors and instructional effectiveness. Diss. Stanford University, 1969.

Slobin, D. I. Developmental psycholinguistics. Survey of Linguistic Science. Ed. W. O. Dingwall. College Park: University of Maryland, 1976.

Smith, V. H. Measuring teacher judgment in the evaluation of written composition. Research in the Teaching of English, 1969, 3, 181-185.

Smith, W. M., McCray, J. W., and Smith, K. U. Delayed visual feedback and behavior. Science, 1960, 132, 1013-14.

Stallings, J. and Kaskowitz, D. H. Follow-through classroom observation evaluation, 1972-73. Menlo Park, Ca: Stanford Research Institute, 1974.

Thelen, H. A. Classroom grouping for teachability. New York: John Wiley, 1967.

Thorndike, R. M. Mental discipline in high school studies. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1924, 15, 1-22, 83-98.

Toth, D. The effects of writing apprehension on attitude change in the counter-attitudinal paradigm. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication Association, Houston, 1975.

Travers, R. M. Ed., Second handbook of research on teaching. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973.

Vygotsky, L. S. Thought and language. Trans. E. Janfmann and G. Vakar. Cambridge: MLT Press, 1962.

Weiss, R. H., and Peich, M. Faculty Attitude Change in a Cross-disciplinary writing workshop. College Composition and Communication, 1980, 31, 33-41.

Young, R. E., Becker, A. L., and Pike, K. L. Rhetoric: discovery and change. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1970.

Zemelman, S. How college teachers encourage students' writing. Research in the Teaching of English, 1977, 11, 227, 34.

Writing Across the Curriculum Project Pamphlets. London: National Association for Teachers of English/Ward Lock Educational, 1973-76.